

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

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FM AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3112

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY LILONGWE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

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CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, SEDU, ZA

SUBJECT: UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA TO REOPEN MAY 10

REF: LUSAKA 0331, A-13, A-22

1. SUMMARY. UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA (UNZA), CLOSED FEBRUARY 9 FOLLOWING A STUDENT STRIKE, WILL REOPEN IN MAY. ALL STUDENTS WILL APPARENTLY BE READMITTED BUT THOSE UNDER DETENTION WILL HAVE THEIR CASES REFERRED FIRST TO SPECIAL TRIBUNAL FOR CONSIDERATION. IN ANNOUNCING REOPENING MINISTER OF EDUCATION WARNED THAT GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE TO DEAL STERNLY WITH THOSE WHO
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SOUGHT TO DISRUPT PROPER FUNCTIONING OF THE UNIVERSITY. NO

EXPLANATION GIVEN FOR TIMING OF DECISION TO REOPEN UNZA BUT IT LIKELY STEM FROM CONCERNS BOTH ABOUT HARM WHICH CONTINUED CLOSURE HAS DONE TO ZAMBIAN HIGHER EDUCATION (INCLUDING DEPORTATION/RESIGNATION OF A NUMBER OF EXPATRIATE FACULTY) AND TO ZAMBIA'S IMAGE ABROAD. END SUMMARY. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

2. FOLLOWING MEETING THE OTHER NIGHT OF UNZA COUNCIL (BOARD OF TRUSTEES), MINISTER OF EDUCATION MULIKITA ANNOUNCED APRIL 7 THAT UNZA WILL REOPEN ON MAY 10, EXACTLY THREE MONTHS AFTER ITS CLOSURE BY GOVERNMENT ON FEBRUARY NINE FOLLOWING STUDENT STRIKE AND SUBSEQUENT POLICE ACTION (REFTEL). MULIKITA SAID THAT FOR ADMINISTRATIVE PURPOSES UNZA WILL BE REOPENED IN TWO STAGES:

(A) THIRD AND FOURTH YEAR STUDENTS IN FOUR-YEAR DEGREE PROGRAMS WILL BE READMITTED MAY 10, ALONG WITH THOSE IN FOURTH AND FIFTH YEARS OF FIVE YEAR DEGREE PROGRAMS; AND (B) ALL OTHER STUDENTS WILL BE READMITTED ON MAY 31.

3. UNLIKE SITUATION WHICH FOLLOWED PREVIOUS CLOSURE OF UNZA IN 1971 FOLLOWING STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS, NO CONDITIONS FOR READMITTANCE WERE SPECIFIED BY MULIKITA, E.G., SIGNATURE OF LOYALTY PLEDGES TO PARTY AND GOVERNMENT. HOWEVER, THOSE 17 STUDENTS WHO HAVE BEEN IN DETENTION SINCE FEBRUARY 9 WOULD HAVE THEIR CASES REVIEWED BY A TRIBUNAL WHOSE RECOMMENDATIONS ON THEIR READMITTANCE WOULD BE SUBMITTED TO THE PARTY AND GOVERNMENT FOR CONSIDERATION. MULIKITA ADDED THAT UNZA COUNCIL WOULD CONSIDER WHETHER OR NOT TO RECRUIT MORE LECTURERS TO REPLACE FIVE EXPATRIATE TEACHERS DETAINED AND LATER DEPORTED (REFAIRS).

4. MULIKITA EXPLAINED THAT IN TAKING DECISION TO REOPEN UNZA, GOVERNMENT HAD TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT A NUMBER OF FACTORS. "THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THE STUDENTS AND STAFF AND ALL OF US HAVE LEARNT OUR LESSONS FROM THE UNFORTUNATE INCIDENTS," HE TOLD PRESS. PARTY AND GOVERNMENT HOPE THAT BOTH STUDENTS AND STAFF WILL NOW ADOPT "A MORE MATURE AND APPROPRIATE ATTITUDE TOWARD THEIR AFFAIRS" AND CREATE SUITABLE ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH TEACHING, LEARNING, AND RESEARCH CAN CONTINUE WITHOUT DISRUPTION. STUDENTS AND STAFF URGED BY MULIKITA TO "STAND FIRM AGAINST FOREIGN INTERFERENCE AND SUBVERSIVE ELEMENTS" AND TO FOSTER "A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP" WITH THE PARTY AND GOVERNMENT. MINISTRY OF EDUCATION WILL WORK LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CLOSELY WITH UNZA AUTHORITIES TOWARD ACHIEVEMENT OF THESE GOALS, AS GOVERNMENT NOT INTERESTED IN REOPENING UNZA ONLY TO HAVE TO CLOSE IT AGAIN SOON AFTERWARDS. HOWEVER, HE WARNED GOVERNMENT WILL NOT HESITATE TO DEAL WITH ANY MEMBERS OF UNZA COMMUNITY WHO SEEKS DISRUPT PROPER FUNCTIONING OF UNIVERSITY BY GROSS MISCONDUCT OR BREACH OF PEACE. IT IS IMPORTANT, HE ADDED, THAT UNZA IDENTIFY ITSELF MORE WITH ASPIRATIONS OF (ZAMBIAN) SOCIETY AND HE APPEALED TO NATION AND TO PARENTS TO GIVE GUIDANCE

TO STUDENTS TO ADOPT MATURE APPROACH TO THEIR STUDIES. END UNCLASSIFIED.

5. COMMENT: REOPENING OF UNZA WILL BE GREETED WITH CONSIDERABLE RELIEF BY STUDENTS, FACULTY, PARENTS, AND WE ASSUME BY PARTY AND GOVERNMENT LEADERS AS WELL. PROLONGED CLOSURE COUPLED WITH DETENTION OF SOME FACULTY AND STUDENTS WAS HAVING SERIOUS ADVERSE IMPACT ON ZAMBIA'S IMAGE ABROAD AS ONE OF VERY FEW AFRICAN STATES ENJOYING CONSIDERABLE MEASURE OF ACADEMIC FREEDOM. PERHAPS EVEN MORE TO THE POINT, THE CONTINUING SUSPENSION OF CLASSES MADE IT SEEM INCREASINGLY LIKELY THAT MOST STUDENTS WOULD HAVE TO REPEAT THE ENTIRE YEAR; GIVEN THE ALREADY STRAINED FACILITIES AT UNZA, THIS WOULD IN TURN HAVE MEANT DELAYING THE ENTRY OF NEW STUDENTS BEYOND THE NORMAL OCTOBER ENTRY. DECISION TO RESUME CLASSES IN MAY, THEREFORE, MAY HAVE BEEN CALCULATED TO ALLOW TIME FOR CURRENT STUDENTS TO MAKE UP FOR LOST TIME BY WORKING THROUGH SUMMER AND STILL COMPLETE YEAR PRIOR TO BEGINNING OF FALL TERM. FURTHER FACTOR WAS UNDOUBTEDLY FACULTY ATTRITION WHICH HAS REPORTEDLY ALL BUT CRIPPLED SCIGOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES. IN ADDITION TO THOSE FIVE LECTURERS DEPORTED AND ZAMBIAN LECTURER STILL IN DETENTION, NUMBER OF OTHERS HAVE REPORTEDLY RESIGNED OR REFUSED TO RENEW THEIR CONTRACTS EITHER ON PRINCIPLE OF ACADEMIC FREEDOM OR BECAUSE THEY FEARED PROLONGED CLOSURE MADE REMAINING AT UNZA LESS ATTRACTIVE. SOME OF THESE MAY NOW CHANGE THEIR MINDS BUT OTHERS MAY NOT. IT COULD BE SOME TIME THEREFORE BEFORE UNZA RECOVERS FROM EFFECTS OF FEBRUARY CLOSE DOWN; A PRINCIPAL VICTIM WILL BE THE SPIRIT OF ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND FEZHING IN LIBERTY TO QUESTION PARTY AND GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND PROGRAMS WHICH HAD PREVAILED PRIOR TO FEBRUARY CLOSURE. THERE SEEMS LITTLE DOUBT THAT HENCEFORTH PARTY AND GOVERNMENT INTEND TO KEEP CLOSER EYE ON FACULTY AND STUDENTS TO ASSURE, AS MULIKITA PUT IT, "UNZA IDENTIFIES ITSELF MORE WITH THE ASPIRATIONS OF SOCIETY." WILKOWSKI

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